

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS
from
A Meta-Analysis of Six Washington State Restorative Justice Projects
Accomplishments and Outcomes, including Recidivism Follow-up Study
January 2002

Background:

The Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (GJJAC) funded a research study, conducted by Cambie Group International, Inc., to examine to what degree restorative justice efforts¹ in our state are impacting how whole communities and justice agencies are dealing with juvenile crime, and to what degree they are effective.

For this study, six projects throughout Washington State (that received federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) grant funding through the GJJAC) that had implemented restorative/ community justice interventions (such as victim-offender mediation, victim impact panels, and community accountability boards) were evaluated. The projects received GJJAC funding from 1998 through 2001 (for either a 2 or 3-year period, ending June 2001). The evaluation also included a recidivism study comparing juvenile offenders who had received restorative interventions with a comparison group of juveniles who received standard probation supervision. The results of this follow-up study are also included in the evaluation report, *A Meta-Analysis of Six Washington State Restorative Justice Projects, Accomplishments and Outcomes, Including Recidivism Follow-up Study*, January 2002.

The six projects, located within five counties in our state,² are working to: prevent juvenile delinquency and strengthen community bonds, give youth opportunities to atone for their offenses, give victims a meaningful way to participate in the juvenile justice process, protect the community, and ensure that youth have the skills they need to function as full and welcome members of their communities.

Evaluation data suggests that juvenile offenders who have participated in restorative justice interventions:

- Acquire a greater understanding of the harm they have done,
- Acquire feelings of empathy towards the people or organizations they have harmed, and
- Are less likely to engage in future delinquent and criminal behavior.

Key Findings:

- **Two restorative justice projects, within Clark County and Whatcom County, are currently delivering or supporting a fully comprehensive and integrated community justice model within their county.** These two counties have devoted equal attention and resources to the five components of the Community Justice Model (victim restoration, offender accountability, offender competency development, justice system reform, and community education/involvement).
- **It is oftentimes challenging, and may be difficult, for some communities to develop a comprehensive community justice system within their county.** Community readiness for community and restorative justice includes collaboration across branches of the justice system, and between the community and justice system providers.

¹ The Balanced and Restorative Justice "BARJ" approach began as a national initiative of the federal Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in 1993; the major components of the BARJ framework for balanced and restorative justice are: accountability, competency development, and community safety.

² The six projects are as follows: Spokane County Victim-Offender Mediation Project, Kitsap County Restorative Justice Project, Clark County Restorative Justice Project, King County Victim Inclusion Project, Whatcom County Victim Restoration Project, and Whatcom County Community Justice Project.

- All five counties offered **victim-offender mediation services** for victims and juvenile offenders. Two hundred and ninety-one (291) offenders and victims were involved in mediation, **with more than 95 percent reaching agreement or resolution**.
- A total of 758 **victims**, in these five counties, **were provided outreach, support or mediation services** to help them deal with the psychological, economic and social harm which they incurred. The strongest programs for victims of juvenile crime occurred in two counties—King and Whatcom.
- A total of 1,414 **juvenile offenders**, in these five counties over a two-year period, were exposed to **restorative values, accountability sanctions, and programmatic activity**.
- **Juvenile offenders** who participated in mediation, and/or victim impact panels, expressed new attitudes of understanding, remorse for harming the victim, and a desire not to do it again.
- **Victim impact panels**, that are small and facilitate dialogue between youth and people who have been victimized by crime, appeared to both increase offender empathy toward victims, while also promoting a greater sense of offender accountability and appreciation for the consequences of delinquent and other harmful behaviors.
- **Victims**, who participated in mediation, expressed satisfaction with the process, with having met the offender, with having the opportunity to talk about how he/she has been harmed, with coming to an agreement for restitution, with getting an apology from the offender, and with having their fear of being re-victimized reduced.
- Youth who participated in **conflict handling or conflict resolution training** appeared to have changed attitudes and new skills to prevent conflict/crime with other peers, family and school authority figures.
- Results of the **Recidivism Study suggest that post-adjudicated probation youth who received restorative justice interventions were less likely to recidivate** in a one to two year follow-up period (mean 16.5 months) than a comparable group of juvenile offenders on standard probation.³
 - **Restorative Justice (Intervention) Group youth** were significantly more likely than the Comparison Group youth to be ordered **to pay restitution, and to mostly or completely pay their restitution orders**. The average amount paid was higher for the Restorative Justice Group than for the Comparison Group.
 - Significantly fewer of the Restorative Justice Group youth than the Comparison Group youth had new offenses during the follow-up period (17% versus 48%). The mean **number of new offenses was significantly less for the Restorative Justice Group youth** versus the Comparison Group youth (.29 versus .93).

In summary, cross-site evaluation study findings show that not only have restorative justice interventions had tremendous value and immediate benefit to both juvenile offenders and victims, they have appeared to impact and reduce re-offense rates for these youth. The successes of these restorative justice projects, and the implementation of a fully comprehensive and integrated community justice model within two counties (Clark and Whatcom), are notable accomplishments.

The evaluator concludes, and recommends, that restorative justice interventions and programs should be considered for replication in other areas of our state—within communities that have demonstrated a strong willingness and interest in developing a collaborative community-based and restorative response to juvenile delinquency and crime.

The full report is available from the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee.

³ The **two groups of youth** were *substantially similar* in terms of gender, prior history of offenses, past history of aggression, and school status and performance, *but different in terms of age and ethnicity* (the comparison group were slightly older (14.4 years vs. 15.1 years), and were more likely to be a minority youth). The two groups were *statistically different* in terms of the proportion of minority youth and in terms of offense type—there was a higher proportion of assault charges in the Comparison group, and fewer malicious mischief and theft charges than in the Intervention Group). The Evaluation Researcher is unaware of research that indicates ethnicity and age (independent of offense history) is a critical factor related to recidivism outcome.